

CLAIMS

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1. A device for absorbing a liquid, comprising a liquid reservoir and a porous membrane, the reservoir comprising an inlet, wherein the reservoir is at least partly occupied by a porous bulk material, characterised in that the membrane is hermetically sealed to or around the reservoir so that fluid passing through the inlet must pass across the membrane, and wherein the membrane has an average pore size of from 1 to 100 micrometers.

2. A device according to claim 1 wherein the membrane has an average pore size which is greater than 10 micrometers.

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3. A device according to ^{claim 1} ~~either claim 1 or 2~~ wherein the membrane has a pore size distribution is such that 95% of the pores have a size of no more than 100 micrometers.

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4. A device according to ^{claim 1} ~~any of claims 1 to 3~~ comprising an inner porous bulk material within an outer membrane, the membrane being hermetically sealed by means of a membrane to membrane seal.

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5. A device according to claim 1 wherein the bulk material is replaced by a void space, characterised in that the porous membrane has an average pore size of from 10 to 100 micrometers.

6. A device according to claim 5 wherein the liquid reservoir is defined by a wall region, and wherein the volume of the liquid reservoir is variable.

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7. A device according to claim 6 wherein the volume of the liquid reservoir is varied by flexibly deforming the wall region.
8. A device according to claim 7 wherein the volume of the liquid reservoir is varied by the action of a piston.
9. A device according to ^{claim 1} ~~any of the previous claims~~ wherein the membrane has a bubble point pressure of at least 1 kPa when measured at ambient temperature and pressure using 0.03% solution of Triton X-100 in distilled water as the standard test liquid.
10. A device according to claim 9 wherein the membrane has a bubble point pressure of from 8 kPa to 50 kPa.
11. A device according to ^{claim 1} ~~any of the previous claims~~ wherein the membrane is a woven mesh or apertured film.

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